

Université de Montréal

Of Songwriting and Storytelling  
as learned through the composition of  
WAG! The Musical

by

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## Résumé

WAG! The Musical est la seconde comédie musicale d'Aleksey Shegolev ainsi que la première à être exécutée dans un théâtre off-Broadway à New York durant l'été 2013. Une des premières comédies de William Shakespeare, Peines d'amour perdues, a servi d'inspiration pour son partenaire Julian Silverman (dramaturge) et lui (compositeur et librettiste) dans la composition de WAG!. Afin de moderniser le sujet shakespearien traité dans les Peines d'amour perdues, plusieurs ajustements ont été nécessaires. Dans le but de maintenir l'attention des spectateurs, le niveau d'intensité dans l'action doit constamment s'élever. Cette thèse traitera notamment des divers procédés musicaux employés dans le but de soutenir l'action. Le rock ' n' roll, ainsi que le jazz furent les principaux langages musicaux à avoir une forte influence sur cette composition. Conséquemment, à travers une analyse détaillée, Shegolev explique comment le rythme, l'harmonie et la texture construisent sa comédie musicale. De plus, la manière de rendre l'humour en musique, si nécessaire au genre comique, sera également objet de discussion dans cette dissertation. La dissertation sera clôturée par un chapitre qui traitera de l'expérience personnelle que Shegolev a accumulée au cours des ateliers de lecture et des répétitions aux quelles sa pièce a été assujettie, afin de monter WAG! dans un théâtre de production à petite échelle à New York.

## Mots clés

Comédie musicale / Théâtre / Paroles de chansons / musique tonale / Jazz / Rock 'n' roll

## Summary

WAG! The Musical is Aleksey Shegolev's second full-length musical and it is the first to be performed in an off-Broadway theatre in New York during the summer of 2013. The idea for the plot was inspired by William Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, and he and his partner, Julian Silverman, created a story fit for modern times. Shegolev was the composer and lyricist, while Silverman was the book writer. Good storytelling and strong songwriting depends on the characters having a goal to pursue as they overcome the obstacles in their paths. As the story progresses, the level of intensity must always rise to keep the audiences' attention. Jazz and rock 'n' roll were the main musical influences on this piece and we will see how rhythm, harmony and texture played a part in creating WAG!. Musicalizing comedy by using various techniques in composition is another topic that will be explored. Finally, this dissertation will close with Shegolev's experiences during the workshop from dealing with the director to the endless revisions and cuts that had to be made before opening night.

## Key Words

Musical / Theatre / Broadway/ Lyrics / Songwriting / Jazz / Rock 'n' roll

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